



[WWW.JDRC.ORG](http://WWW.JDRC.ORG)

## CREATING COMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR HIGH HOLIDAYS AND SHABBAT SERVICES

JDRC encourages you to use this checklist as a guide in partnership with your Deaf and Hard of Hearing members to ensure that High Holiday and Shabbat services are welcoming and accessible for all. Some of these tips not only support Deaf and Hard of Hearing members, but also enhance accessibility for *everyone* in your community.

1. **Partner with your Deaf and Hard of Hearing members:** Ask directly about their access needs and preferences with as much advance notice so that appropriate accommodations can be made available.
2. **Accommodations:**
  - a. **Reserve front row seating:** Ensure clear sightlines to the bimah, interpreters, and captioning screens.
  - b. **Prepare materials for interpreters and captioners:** Share sermons, speeches, and a list of prayers with page numbers in advance to give interpreters and captioners ample time to prepare.
  - c. **Materials for Participants:** Provide an option for Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants to request printed materials.
  - d. **Ensure interpreter visibility:** Provide good lighting and no visual obstructions. Place a music stand nearby for interpreters to hold materials without blocking sightlines.

- e. **Offer effective captioning.** Virtual platforms' auto captions do not transliterate Hebrew. Consider slides with Hebrew transliteration and English, or arrange for a trained captioner.
  - f. **Announce page numbers often.**
  - g. **Use microphones consistently.** Encourage everyone speaking to use them, including Torah readers and those offering blessings.
3. **When technology is not permitted:** Provide - upon request - print copies of sermons and prayer outlines for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and older congregants.
  4. **Test technology:** Run a trial of your livestream, captioning software, and interpreter visibility to troubleshoot issues before the service begins.
  5. **Publicize accessibility:** Let your community know in advance on all marketing materials and the website the specific types of accommodations, such as ASL interpretation and/or captioning, that will be available.

Accessibility grows when it's built in partnership with Deaf and Hard of Hearing members. Together, we can create services where everyone belongs.

For guidance in planning accessible High Holiday and Shabbat services, or to request interpreters experienced in Jewish settings, contact JDRC at [inquiry@jdrc.org](mailto:inquiry@jdrc.org) for support and resources.

As a nonprofit with limited funds, we welcome [donations](#) to ensure our ability to provide resource support to your synagogue or organization.

Jewish Deaf Resource Center, P.O. Box 318, Hartsdale, NY 11530